Retro Gaming
Magazine
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Sharp X68000
The best gaming computer
you never heard of
Post Mortem Gaming,
Game Hacks and
more in this issue!

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HERE WE GO. . .

The first time you do anything new, it's always a massive learning experience. Nothing is going to be perfect, you're going to find a million things you could have done better, and in the aftermath your thoughts are consumed with shoulds, woulds, and coulds.

Thankfully we have followers who are vocal with not just their praise but also their criticism. While it's great to hear what our readers liked, it's even better for us to know didn't work. And boy howdy, did we get *loads* of suggestions for what we could improve. Hopefully you'll see a number of them as you flip through the pages.

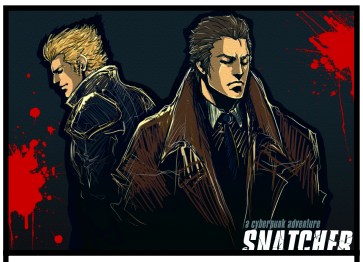
In many ways, the second issue of a magazine is more significant than the first. You're proving that you aren't a one-trick pony. But you're also proving you listen to readers. You're taking those critiques to heart. And you're using the praise you earned to push through that difficult trial period.

Criticism, suggestion and praise don't lose their value after the second issue though. They become more precious as time goes on, directing us onwards and upwards. We'll experiment, we'll try new things, and we promise that everything we cover relates to our name in some way. That's our pledge, our part of the deal as gRetro Gaming Magazine.h

Your part of the deal is to hold us to those standards, tell us when stuff doesn't work, and (hopefully) enjoy reading the stuff that does. We can't shake all of your hands individually to seal that deal, but at the very least we can put it in writing.

Game on!

--Michael Crisman



Our cover is a professional piece by Danell Fugate . For more of her great art, check out her website at spoonybardess.deviantart.com

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Questions, concerns or plain ready to rant contact us at

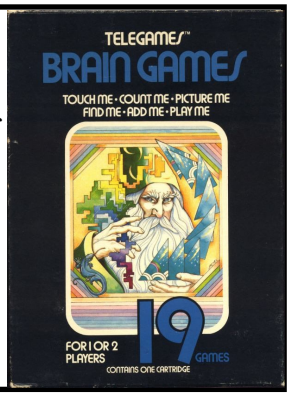
retrogaminmag at Gmail.com

Turn the page ands start enjoying the mag already!

Corrections:

In our first issue, the interview with Susan Jaekel featured various game covers that she painted around the border of the page. One of those boxes was wrong. We intended to run the Sears version of Brain Games but somehow the Atari version got inserted.

This is the correct Brain Games box that Ms. Jaekel worked on. Our apologies for any confusion this may have caused.



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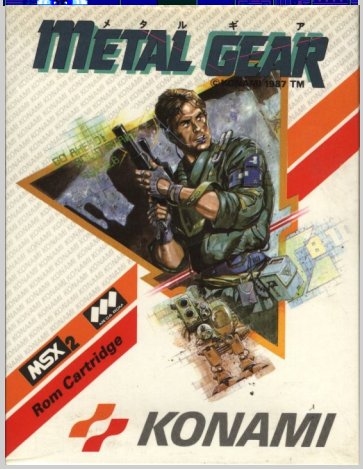

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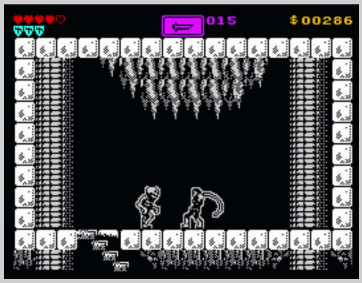

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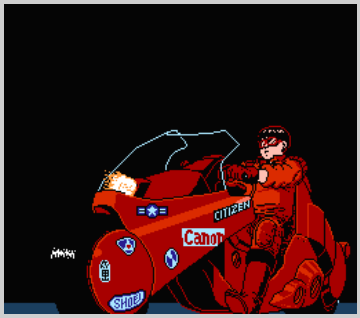

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The Sharp X68000 never got released in North America it is a shame– find out what we missed out on.

Fan Translations

Fan translations are quite simply, games translated from one language to another. Most often this occurs with games that were released in Japan only and then are translated to English, even games that received an English release are often re-translated by fans. Some games that receive an official English translation usually receive lots of needless edits and sometimes censored depending on the beliefs, laws and religious views of the receiving country. This is evident in games like Splatterhouse on the Turbo Grafx-16 where upside down crosses were altogether removed while they were intact in the PC-Engine version. Other translations are much more invasive such as what happened with Dynamite Headdy (pg. 9) or the Phantasy Star and Final Fantasy series of Role Playing Games where characters, equipment, magical abilities and more were changed on a game by game basis.

Dedicated fans have taken on the challenge of fixing these errors, sometimes the results are great and sometimes the translating team take liberties of their own (much to the chagrin of purist fans). The fan translations we are featuring here run the gamut of digital comics (complementing the other main article in this issue) to action games such as Dynamite Headdy (pg. 9) but also touches on strategy (Front Mission on page 11) to horror adventure games (Sweet Home on page 10).

We kick off the Fan Translations article with an interview with Artemio Urbina of JunkerHQ and The Policenauts Translation Team. Turn the page already and find out what you really were missing back in the day!

Interview: Artemio Urbina

Retro Gaming Magazine (RGM): Would you like to introduce yourself, the team?

Artemio Urbina (Artemio): Marc is a professional translator; he joined me on this project shortly after I made very little progress in dumping the script. Back then he was working on translating the script copying the text from the game, and had made amazing progress. He is incredibly dedicated to his work; you can't imagine the amount of time employed in finding the best translation for each line and the implications of any change further down the road.

Slowbeef joined us by mid 2008, our previous Playstation hacker had left due to lack of time and we were stalled. He was interested in doing a "Let's play" rundown for Something Awful, which he did and received a great response. After that he joined us in the attempt, and made strides at the stuff we were missing. He had a very busy year, with long weekends and nights of working. He is very through in his work.

Lastly myself, I am a software developer but during these years the time I had for this project decreased. I've been more of a script dumper in previous projects, although in this case I was involved with some tasks such as the graphic dumper and re-inserter for part of the needed changes. I was also involved with part of the code for FMV text reinsertion.

Of course we were not the only ones working in this project, several others were responsible for invaluable help and we mention them in the readme file.

RGM: Why take on something like Policenauts for your translation project?

Artemio: I believe we all took on it because we wanted to play it in English, and be able to share that with others. You know the feeling, when you want other people to complete the same game you played because you enjoyed it so much. Of course the only member of the team who had played the game with full understanding was Marc.

Junker HQ was established as a site dedicated to gather the attention of people interested in joining this and other projects. I was working on dumping the Policenauts script, with which I had some success but it wasn't really getting anywhere. I had successfully dumped the text of other Kojima games, such as Snatcher for the Saturn and PSX as well as for the MSX; which became its own translation patch. In the past I had worked with a team dumping the text in another game for the Super Famicom and that one also became a working patch.

So as you can see, the real goal was to have Policenauts translated. I didn't know when or how, since in reality my experience was related to making the Japanese script available. But I knew it could happen since some of my efforts had helped in the past. Since I made my intentions and early info public, we received mails with help occasionally. When Marc came on board the project became solid.

RGM: You worked on translations for Snatcher on PSOne, Saturn and MSX, when were those completed?

Artemio: The Saturn and PSX were never ongoing. I only dumped the whole text in Japanese and it is available for download.

The MSX one was the same, but Takamichi Suzukawa translated the script I dumped and published that on his site (which now I host). Later on, Daniel Caetano took that translated script and implemented a translation.

He published that patch in English and Portuguese

RGM: So what versions of Snatcher/Policenauts are available in English that you worked on?

Artemio: Only Snatcher for MSX and Policenauts for Playstation. That previous Snatcher for MSX was what you'd call an Internet project. I dumped the script and posted that, Takamichi translated it and posted that and Daniel patched the game and posted that. There was no interaction between us in the other's work. Of course we exchanged some emails, but had no further say in what happened after we finished our part.

On the other hand, with Policenauts we were fully involved the whole process, to the extent of our abilities of course.

RGM: So there are updated English patches for Snatcher too?

Artemio: Just the MSX version. We didn't touch the Sega/ Mega CD one. I only dumped the text of that one as well.

RGM: So Policenauts is definitely not your first translation then?

Artemio: It is the first one I work to the end in. In the other projects, I was just the script dumper. In this one I did part of the actual work to reinsert the translated images/text.

[For more information visit this link and this one]

http://slowbeef.com/romhack/pnhack1.html

http://slowbeef.com/romhack/pnhack2.html

RGM: How many years did it take to complete the translation?

Artemio: That is hard to answer with precision. I started the project in 2001. But didn't make much progress since I was also dumping other game data. I made some progress a few years later, since I only worked on this occasionally. It was a broken process, with continuity just given by the website (Junker HQ) and email communication between Marc, myself and any third part that could help. I would say that it took 1 year from Slowbeef's involvement, plus 1 year with our previous programmer and a few months that I worked on it beforehand. If you are talking actual worked time, if you mean years since startup, it was 8 full years. My idea from the start was to have it done. I knew I didn't have the time neither all the skills necessary, so patience was part of the idea, of setting up a website back then with my open progress was all I could do

RGM: Wow. Talk about dedication. From your experience, what was the hardest part of the process?

Artemio: Text reinsertion into the game, and I would say that what maybe the hardest part in anything is the small details. Slowbeef had to reimplement the text printing routine in assembly, and there were several details that drove us crazy, like the text in some places was not text at all, but graphics in a different implementation within the game. Stuff like that.

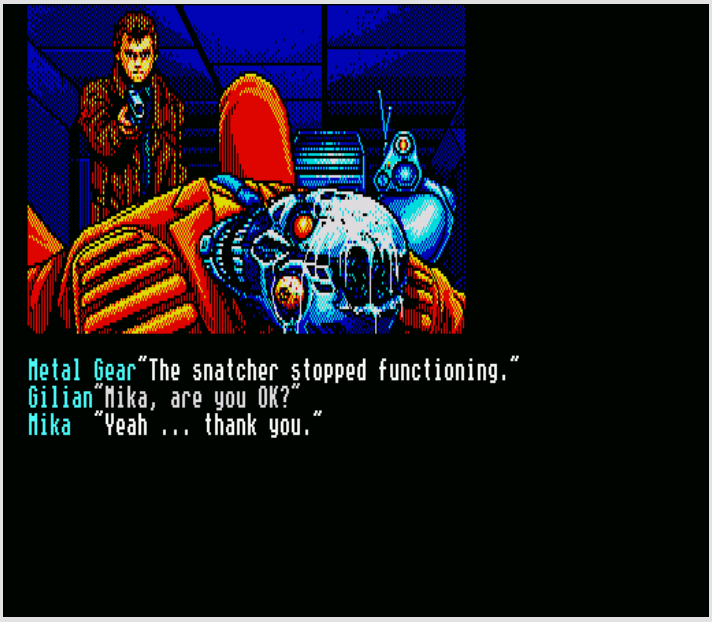
RGM: What was the most fun or interesting part of the project?

Artemio: From my perspective I had great fun decoding the credits from the intro, figuring out how the graphics were stored in the video files and getting BMP images out of that was really fun. I also had a lot of fun talking with Marc about specific lines. I recall once that there was this phrase by Confucius "My doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity". We spent hours looking for the typical translation to English of the phrase, so that someone who knew it would properly recognize it.

It was fun because Marc was usually very concerned with that kind of stuff. And every time he asked me to give my thoughts on anything like that, it was great looking around for information and learning a lot in the process.

RGM: Has there been a lot of fan interest in the translation patch since it released?

Artemio: That is a very relative thing to qualify. I feel it has,



and am glad that the response has been very positive. It is great finding out that so many people are playing the game and their comments on social networks and forums. I believe fans have been generally pleased.

RGM: I am sure you saw the various posts around the net on forums claiming this was never going to be released, how does it feel to prove those naysayers wrong?

Artemio: We were aware of a few of those. But in reality we were never driven by those opinions. I feel that we were very concentrated in our own forum, with the tenths of users who were really following the translation closely. Since we were working at our own pace and weren't in an active competition with anyone else it had little effect in us. During that weekend we were releasing, our feelings were of anticipation, nervousness and emotion. It was a very positive experience to feel how people were reacting to our posts on several forums. We announced it during the night of the 22nd by posting we would release the patch the next day. Response on those threads was positive and I believe everything went in that direction for most of the time.

RGM: Eyes down and focused on the task at hand type of approach. I have played a little bit of the translated game and the patch is wonderful. The effort involved is evident from the first words onscreen.

Artemio: Yes, that was our approach. We had plenty to do instead of paying attention to a few that were saying that kind of stuff. I am glad you liked the final product; we strived to make that speak for itself.

RGM: The game really does speak volumes for the effort put into it. What is on the horizon for you and your team after the much deserved rest?

Artemio: We really don't know. Several of our members really deserve a longer rest, and we are not sure if we will go on with other projects as a team because of how demanding this is.

I do know that I'll continue with Junker HQ for as long as it is useful, and will probably be involved in a Saturn port of the translation if we find the people to do it. There are several possibilities, but we can't say we are working on either since we don't want to disappoint the fans interested in them.

RGM: I have been asked why I don't ask this in interviews recently so, what is your favorite color?

Artemio: That is indeed a strange question. And one for which I probably have no answer, since the answer has changed though the years and I've not thought about my actual preference. I would go with green.

RGM: Was it hard to translate the large amount of terms and information that Policenauts has in it? Weren't there a lot of medical terms?

Artemio: Yes, it was really hard. It took Marc several months of work because he did research on everything. He tried to avoid any imprecision and even had to correct a few things. Since there's been 15 years since the original release, several things have changed. Of course we tried to keep it as close to the original as possible, but science has advanced as expected. Marc read a lot into space colonies, scientific and medical journals and of course a lot of Wikipedia. The amount of technical and medical Kanji in the original is overwhelming as well.

RGM: Do you have any comments for the many fans out there that have waited patiently for this patch?

Artemio: I'd like people to enjoy this game as much as we do, finding out the small details that are hidden everywhere. Just as with Snatcher, Kojima and his team created a very immersive experience. I like to think of it as giving a world life through extreme detail. Take your time and change your mind space with this experience. I'd also suggest people to check out our online glossary, it is at our site and it is the translation of the official glossary, I am sure that interested people will find that of use. I also hope that the adventure game genre and visual novel genre get a rebirth some time down the line.

[The Policenauts Glossary] http://policenauts.net/english/glossary.html

RGM: On behalf of the readers of RetroGamingMagazine.com and our partners, I would like to thank you for your hard work, years of sacrifice and dedication in bringing this game to English speaking gamers everywhere.

Artemio: Thank you for playing and taking the time for this interview, I hope it was interesting.

For the Spanish speaking fans you can check out Atomix Live on Ustream, their current show is here [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG5iccaGq5g] where many games are discussed, also, here is the archive for Atomix [http://www.ustream.tv/channel/atomix-live]

On the following pages, you will find many different games, most notably missing from this list is a bunch of Role Playing Games (RPG). We deliberately left out the easy targets for a fan translation article such as just about any Final Fantasy game and the Phantasy Star series. We feel these types of games receive enough coverage as it is and would rather devote the next several pages to games that are not regularly covered.

Games like Dynamite Headdy were completely butchered when they were "localized" for North American gamers and others like Front Mission never made it in an official release. For some gamers, the games we chose may seem like old fare and to others, these are brand new games that they never knew were available in English.

Either way, the staff of RGM had a blast with this article!

Fan Translations

Dynamite Headdy 2.0: Complete

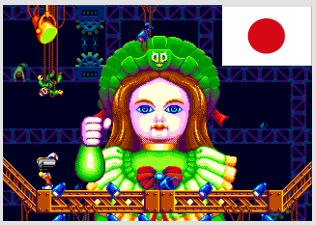
EUGENIO ANGUEIRA

Sega Genesis 1994

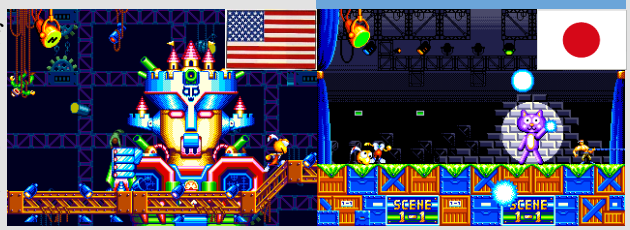
Major Changes:

Tons of story text was removed in the North American version.

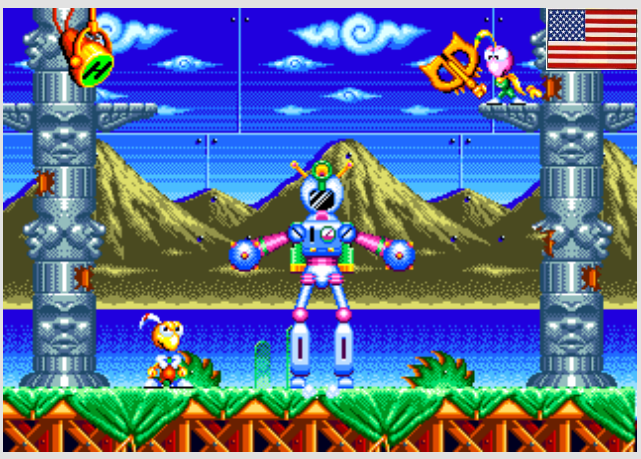
Dynamite Headdy is a platformer created for the Genesis/MegaDrive by Treasure and released by Sega in 1994 globally. The game follows the adventures of Dynamite Headdy in the puppet town of North Town. Headdy must face Dark Demon and his minions to stop him from converting all the toys in town into evil minions and from controlling the world. Along the way, Headdy fights Dark Demon's elite guards, the Keymasters, and he deals with a jealous puppet called Trouble Bruin (Maruyama in Japan). Bruin will stop at nothing to prevent Headdy from completing his task. Thankfully, Headdy has friends: HangMan lets Headdy pull himself up platforms (or pull them towards him) while HeadCase lets Headdy choose other heads with different abilities. These heads are of strategic importance as they give Headdy different abilities (shooting, fitting through smaller spaces, etc.). The game has nine difference "scenes" the player must traverse. A Keymaster boss awaits Headdy at the end of each scene. When defeated, the bosses release items of which Headdy must grab a certain number to get "continue" points.



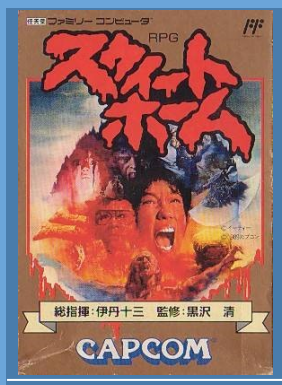
Dynamite Headdy went through several changes when exported from Japan. Many of the changes make the game more difficult or even frustrating. While the game still has all nine areas, their names have been changed and many of the story details have been removed. In fact, a lot of dialog that is seen in the Japanese version (particularly before fighting Keymasters) is absent from the exported version. Many of the same bosses remain but several have been changed (e.g., dolls replaced by robots, color changes). The bosses also have different patterns and require more hits to be defeated, something that increases the difficulty level. In addition, the ending differs due to the removed story elements. Another element that was changed is the number of "continues" the player has at the start - zero (two continues are given in the original)! Also more items must be grabbed from a defeated boss to get a "continue."



Thanks to a fan translation of the original Japanese title, players outside of Japan can now enjoy Dynamite Headdy as it was meant to be played...with its full dialog and a complete storyline. Overall, the game is challenging but fun. It certainly boasts some of the most colorful graphics that can be found on a Genesis/MegaDrive game. Be sure to give it a try.



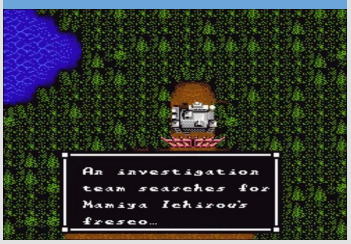
Fan Translations



MICHAEL CRISMAN

Sweet Home was never localized for North America.

SH is believed to be a precursor of Resident Evil.



Sweet Dreams Are Made of These...

Imagine yourself as a Japanese gamer in 1989 reading about *Sweet Home*: an 8-bit horror film tie-in, developed by a studio whose experience creating turn-based RPGs was best summed up as who, us? Could you finish the article before the laughter began? Against all odds, Capcom pulled some Captain Kirk-level badassery out of this Kobayashi Maru and proved they ate no-win scenarios for breakfast. *Sweet Home* is the real deal. At least it was in Japan.

Nintendo Power might have teased a US adaptation, but that was before they realized the only things to survive the censors would be the title screen, door animations, and character names. Thus it fell to fans to rescue this absurdly awesome adventure from its Pacific-bound home and release it into the English-speaking wild.

Sweet Home is the story of five film makers who learned nothing from Cannibal Holocaust. Equipped with only their courage, some essential tools, and a complete inability to stay the hell out of haunted houses, Kazuo, Asuka, Taguchi, Akiko and Emi explore the abandoned mansion of the deranged artist/child murderer Mamiya Ichirou, a woman so terrifying that Freddy Krueger checks for her under his bed. Your job is to wander the house and grounds, uncover what broke Mamiya's sanity, and set things right (if that's even possible).

Most RPGs give you magic spells, armor, inns, and the ability to resurrect party members. To these conventions, *Sweet Home* says: bite me. Healing is limited, enemies roam the map in real time, and if somebody dies, you loot the corpse and carry on albeit weaker than before. Influences for *Resident Evil* wriggle all through this game like maggots; even the between-room transitions feature animated doors. And the atmosphere, oh the atmosphere...

Years before *System Shock* had you reading notes from other characters to convey the storyline, *Sweet Home* was pasting bloody memos up on the wall describing just how screwed you were. Between these, the disgusting enemies, the creepy music, and the animated death sequence when one of your crew reaches their own final reel, *Sweet Home* is unrepentant in maintaining atmosphere. They did that in an 8-bit game? crossed my mind time and again. And the answer was always, Yes. And wait until you see what's next.

I thought it was unfortunate the English-speaking world was denied the pleasure of this game for so long. Then I remembered the results of most Nintendo localizations and realized this was for the best. Instead of groan-worthy, the truck have started to move moments, we got a kick-ass translation by a team who not only cared about the material and presentation, but were also (and I cannot stress this enough) *fluent in freaking English*.

Sweet Home is the very definition of a 'must-play'. That Capcom managed this so effectively without previous experience makes it that much more impressive. Sure the puzzles are mostly the find-key-to-open-door fare. There's an awful lot of backtracking. You'll go nuts trying to remember where you dropped that item an hour ago. But you didn't beat *Dino Crisis* the first time you picked it up either. Sweet dreams...

Fan Translations

Wanzer– Walking Robot of Destruction

Front Mission is a Japanese exclusive that many Super Nintendo owning gamers, myself included, longed to play in English. For about a year, it looked like Squaresoft, now Square Enix, would be bringing this giant robot turn based strategy game to North America- it never happened on the SNES, officially.

Thanks to the hacking community we can now finally enjoy Front Mission on the SNES in English. Let me tell you, it was worth the wait. Front Mission is just as fun today as it probably was back in the 90's and even better considering I can actually read what is going on.

The story follows a group of mercenary types that were once a leading military platoon who were unjustly dropped after a certain event that caused the second battle over a decent sized strategic island. This story is told throughout the game as you progress, how you get to the next step though is the fun part.

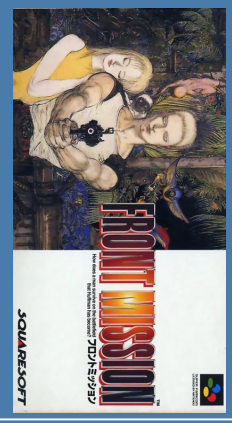
Front Mission is a turn based strategy title with tons of ambience and challenge, all in a 16-Bit cartridge. On the battle field, the festivities are your normal turn based strategy fair- just with giant robots. The usual trappings are all here, colored areas alerting you to movement/attack areas and the ability to use a turn to use inventory items.

The battles are great, though can grow monotonous after 20+ hours of play (you will see tons of battles). The awesome part about the battles is that your Wanzer (walking tank) reflects the changes that you make in the towns. Arming long range weapons or a different gun changes the look of your Wanzer in the shop and on the battlefield (at least in one on one battle). There are hundreds of options from legs, bodies, arms to weapons and axillary items that are detailed. Just don't get lost in the arena (a great way to earn more money for upgrades).

Ah, the arena. The Arena literally adds a ton of depth to the Front Mission universe and offers a convenient place to test out new Wanzer designs, weapons arrangements and to hone your skills without having to face a life or death situation in the normal game. The Arena events carry over to the rest of the game too since the Wanzer work loads are kept, unless you change them, and your character earns both cash and experience from Arena battles. I have played Front Mission several times over the years and each time, at some point, I get lost in the Arena battles and forget the storyline – forcing me to restart, again.

If you are a fan of giant robots then you will feel at ease with the Wanzers. They don't carry familiar designs such as Transformers (you won't see an Optimus Prime or Megatron) or Voltron or Robotech here. There is no way to edit your way into any familiar robots either.

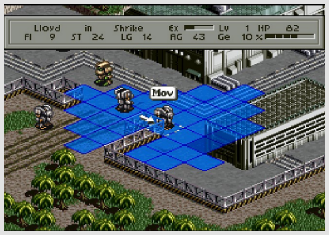
Front Mission has only seen release on one North American system, the Nintendo DS where it received many updates that change the game enough to warrant playing both versions.



CARL WILLIAMS

We never got Front Mission on the SNES.

Playstation 2 did see Front Mission 3 in NA.



Fan Translations

MICHAEL CRISMAN

Contra has a story that North American gamers never knew about.

You do now.

More to this run-n-gun than met the eye

We'll reserve the war of words over whether *Metal Slug* or *Contra* is the better action shooter for a later issue. Right now, this is all about one of the best run-and-gun games to ever grace the good old Nintendo Entertainment System, and how US gamers got screwed out of the real deal.

If you're confused, don't feel bad. It's not your fault: Contra's storyline is paper-thin and about as robust. Two muscle-bound Rambo clones repel an entire alien invasion using nothing more than their acrobatic skills and limitless ammunition. It's the NES game we've *all* beaten, and that we keep going back to time and time again because there's something obscenely satisfying about scrolling your buddy off the bottom of the Waterfall stage. Was the Japanese version *really* all that different?

Short answer: not really, no.

Long answer: okay, kind of, yeah. Japanese gamers didn't get extra stages, or unique weapons, or bonus boss fights, or enhanced difficulty. What they did get could be considered the Director's Cut though. Japanese Contra has its storyline conveyed through between-level animated cut scenes where Bill and Lance report their progress. It has enhanced graphics, like an actual blizzard in the Snow Field stage and a map that displays your progress through the game, thanks to a custom chip not found in the US version. And it has extra cheats available, including a sound test and stage select. It also takes place in the year 2633, as opposed to the US version, which is set in 1987. There's even a hidden message after the credits, where Red Falcon taunts you that the war isn't over yet, thus setting the stage for *Super C*.

Enterprising ROM hackers have translated the Japanese version into English so US

gamers can get a taste of what they've been missing all these years. Isn't it time you played Contra again, the way it was meant to be played? It's cool, you can put the magazine down while you do it. We'll wait.

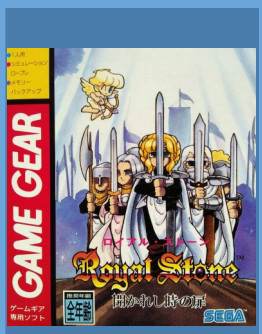
<Time passes...>

Admit it: you used the Konami code, didn't you? It's OK. We did too (just to verify it worked, mind you...we're not cheaters or anything. Honest!).

"CONTRA" IS A TITLE AWARDED TO A SUPERIOR SOLDIER POSSESSING ALMOST SUPER-HUMAN DRIVE AND ABILITY, WHILE EXCELLING IN GUERRILLA TACTICS.
IN THE YEAR 2631 A.D., A MYSTERIOUS METEORITE FELL INTO THE GALUGA ARCHIPELAGO NEAR NEW ZEALAND.
TWO YEARS LATER, A MYSTERIOUS INVADER CALLING ITSELF "RED FALCON" PLOTS THE DOWNFALL OF MANKIND BY FORTIFYING THE ENTIRE GALUGA ARCHIPELAGO.
ORDERS WERE GIVEN TO BILL AND LANCE OF THE EARTH MARINE CORPS' "CONTRA" UNIT TO DESTROY THE ENEMY'S BASE.

Fan Translations

Turn based strategy on the go



CARL WILLIAMS

Royal Stone is the sequel to the little known Game Gear title, Crystal Warriors.

In North America we saw a pretty sparse variety of games on the Sega Game Gear, a lot of action titles were all that really hit these shores. One title that did make it here was Crystal Warriors, a little known title that spawned a sequel in Japan. Royal Stone is the more refined of the two with much better battle animations, overall graphics and sound and a better story that builds, somewhat, off of Crystal Warriors.

If you are familiar with newer titles such as the Fire Emblem series (another that has many good Japan only titles) then you are already familiar with the battle system of Royal Stone. Built on the Rock, Paper, Scissors style of battle, Royal Stone expands a bit with more battle options. Certain unit types and weapons are strong/weak against others. Learning the sway of the battles is required for success in Royal Stone.

Much like Fire Emblem, Front Mission and just about every other game in this genre, the game is setup via a long, non interactive, story sequence. Once you are familiar with the situation of your character having wronged the country you are thrust into battle with an all but unknown group of foes that want you dead. You start on one side of the map by Tese Town while the enemy is blocking the only exit out of the area- a path through a small mountain range.

Defeating your enemies earn money and experience points as usual. The trick here is to wait to defeat the boss who is marked by being a different color and has a speaking role in the battles. Defeating the boss early in the battle will cost your characters any extra money and experience they could have earned from the rest of the group of creatures threatening them.

For a Game Gear game, Royal Stone, is pretty darn amazing. The graphics are superb, colorful and there is a lot of little details in the battle scenes. The battle scenes are different too, rather than the combatants occupying each side of the screen, they are in a vertical column (your character facing up the screen while the enemy faces down). Attacking and defending are all animated onscreen in a fashion that is much better than that of similar titles like Phantasy Star and Final Fantasy.

Royal Stone has a slightly more mature storyline that may have been the reason that Sega passed on bringing it over to North America. Another reason is the longevity of the Game Gear which was not going all that strong in 1995, the year that Royal Stone was released in Japan. Had Sega worked on bringing this over, it would have been at least late 1995 into early 1996 before it would have been ready. Also, in one scene, your character is tied to a cross looking contraption and dumped into the water below. That probably effected Sega's reasoning to not localize Royal Stone.

Royal Stone shows off quite well what the Game Gear was capable of in the right hands.

Strategy fans, here is another quality game, now in English. Play Royal Stone on Game Gear as soon as possible.

I've done lots of bad things in my time, but nothing so vicious as
What of my husband? Will he not return?
HP. 128 128
WIND 0%
HP. 163 163
FIRE 10%
〈Eugene〉
Eva! Eva's in that village! I want her dead!
HP. 128 128
WIND 0%
HP. 143 163
WATER 0%

Fan Translations

CARL WILLIAMS

Metal Gear on the NES was good but check out the original, unedited title that we didn't get.

Metal Gear the way it was intended

Those of us in North America are familiar with the original Metal Gear title for the Nintendo Entertainment System. Metal Gear was a unique title on Nintendo's machine that was popularized by action games that promoted run and gun, jump in and don't think, play mechanics. Metal Gear was more a thinking persons adventure which promoted stealth and avoiding interacting with the in game enemies.

Completely different from the norm.

Many things were changed in the conversion to the 8-Bit Nintendo including the COMPLETE removal of the end boss, the Metal Gear itself. This behemoth was replaced with a "super computer" in the North American version of the game for some reason.

It didn't help that Hideo Kojima only worked on the MSX2 version of Metal Gear while the console ports for North America, Japan and Europe were created by another, separate, team without his interaction or support. Worse yet, the North American and European only Metal Gear 2: Snake's Revenge continued this "slapping the face" of Kojima by again, being created without his input.

To make matters worse, the team that worked on the console version were told to make it as different from the MSX version as possible. That explains a lot of the changes that were made in the NES version when comparing it to the screens shown here (from the MSX version).

The MSX version features different bosses, completely different level layouts and new surprises that were not present in the NES version. We tried to not spoil too many of the surprises in these pics but some (like what Metal Gear actually looks like) were too hard to pass up.

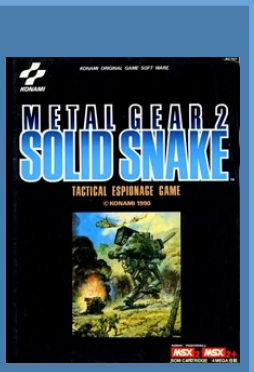
Another change is the introduction. In the MSX version you have a watery introduction while the NES version you are parachuting into the jungle. Really sets the mood.

This version of Metal Gear has seen release in North America, sort of. If you own Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistance, or the HD version, then you have a copy of this game (and the sequel covered on the next page).

This is a completely different game than what gamers understood to be "Metal Gear"

Fan Translations

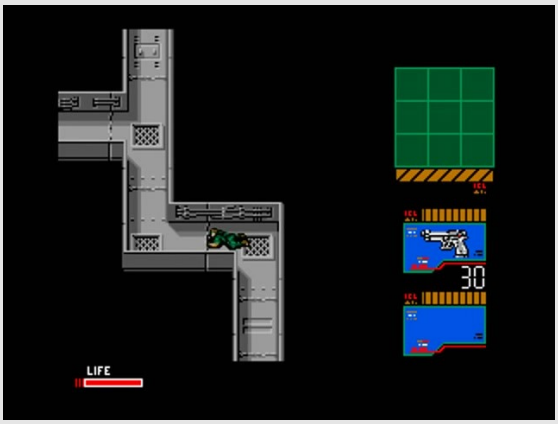
Not even similar to Snake's Revenge



CARL WILLIAMS

Forget Snake's Revenge and check out the true Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake

Snake's Revenge was what many thought to be Metal Gear 2 in North America. Officially, it is not, it is just a "military game" that happens to share some character names and game play elements with the Metal Gear universe. Hideo Kojima wasn't even involved with Snake's Revenge and it did not see a Famicom release in Japan either.



That explains a lot.

The true Metal Gear 2, subtitled Solid Snake, was released in Japan for the MSX2 computer. What is here is completely different than what many retro gamers in North America are accustomed to. Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake is more different than Doki Doki Panic was from either the original Super Mario Bros or Super Mario Bros 3.

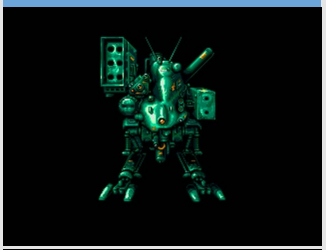
The story goes that Kojima didn't even intend to create a sequel to Metal Gear but after finding out that Konami had released Snake's Revenge without consulting him on it, and a little prodding by an associate, Solid Snake was born.

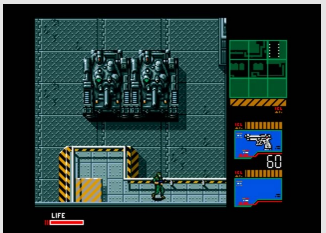
Changes that you can expect in this official sequel include, well, everything. While the view of the action is the same, the guards received an upgrade in their vision capabilities and now weapons have a lot more information available.

Snake is able to climb through ventilation ductwork, much like you see in the movies and he can equip additional items such as cigarettes (not sure why other than looking "80's cool"). The enemies now patrol multiple screens, can turn their heads to change their field of view so you have to pay attention and there are more communications with team members in Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake.

As mentioned earlier, there were re-releases of these games on newer consoles but they feature some editing to various things in the game. Cigarettes in the newer versions deplete Snake's health and most of the character portraits were changed to match the other games in the series better (Snake looks more like modern Snake for instance). These changes may seem small but to purists, they are still changes and to some, not worth being implemented in the game.

Forget Snake's Revenge even was released and just play this version and enjoy it as Kojima intended.

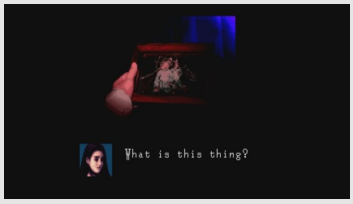


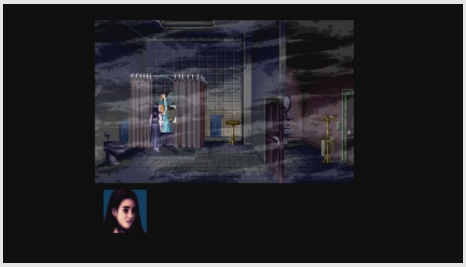


Fan Translations

MICHAEL CRISMAN

Sadistic adventure set in a creepy mansion with a monster named Scissorman after you. Yes, please.





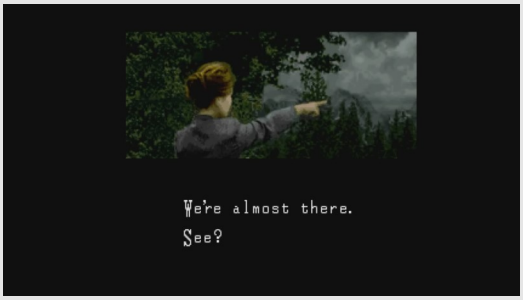
You Cannot Hide From Scissorman

Part point-and-click adventure game, part pants-shitting induction device, the original Clock Tower is one of the most sadistic games programmed for the Super Nintendo. So of course it was only available in Japan. All that changed when a group of ROM hackers and translators decided there was no reason the English-speaking world should be spared the terror of spastic colons.

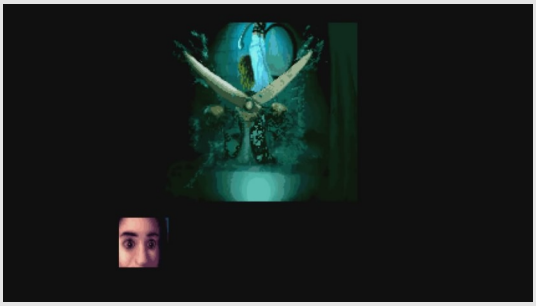
Clock Tower is one of those easy to learn, hard to win games, not because the puzzles are overly difficult but because of the game's own semi-random nature. The scares in this game are entirely of the jump variety, with the heroine stalked through the corridors and rooms of the creepy Barrows Mansion by Tyrion Lannister's homicidal step-nephew, Scissorman. Much like Game of Thrones, everybody in the game is fated to cruel, callous and seemingly random deaths. Which of the game's nine different endings you get often depends on who you've seen (or not seen) get killed by the time you reach the climax.

Making progress more difficult is Scissorman's adoption of the horror movie trope where the killer can literally be anywhere and appear at any time. Though it may frustrate your inner temporal physicist, it's entirely possible to escape from him by running up the stairs and into a bedroom, only to have him pop out from under the bed and resume the chase. Being a simple Norwegian orphan unskilled in any form of combat, your options for defending yourself are extremely limited, and it's easy to exhaust your stamina in a matter of seconds trying to fight him off.

The best part about Clock Tower is how effectively it manages to scare the ever-loving crap out of the player using the 16-bit resources of the Super Nintendo to their full potential. Capcom uses the jump scare effectively in Resident Evil, and Konami is the master of psychologically getting under your skin with Silent Hill, but the Clock Tower franchise leaves them both hiding under the bed. Even when you know what you need to do and where you need to go in order to escape the mansion, you are left with that dreaded feeling of neither wanting to press ahead or turn back, because neither option guarantees your safety.



If you've played your way through Outlast this generation and want to experience its spiritual ancestor, grab your favorite Super Nintendo emulator, the Clock Tower translation patch, and see where it all started. Oh, and seriously: use the bathroom before playing. There's nothing macho about skid marks.



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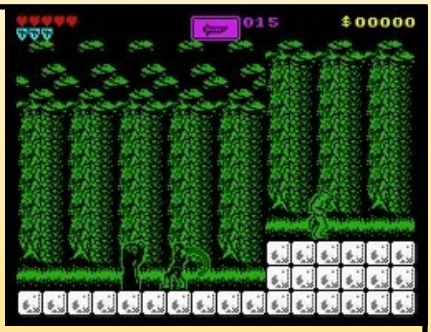
Castlevania for the ZX Spectrum
Release: Full version to release soon
Words: Carl Williams

Interesting: It is Castlevania II on the Spectrum
Improve it by: Adding more levels and enemies
Annoying Because: The full version isn't here yet

Konami never released an official version of Castlevania for the ZX Spectrum but that has not stopped fans from making their own version. One of the games entered in the recent Retro Games Battle 2014 competition (www.retrogamesbattle.com) was a Castlevania II game for the ZX Spectrum.

Before you get all excited, this is a demo, the full version has not been released as of this writing. What is there are several levels, a town with inhabitants and plenty of enemies. Everything has that Castlevania feel to it from the stairs to the skeleton and werewolf enemies you will encounter.

Graphically the levels scream Castlevania from the backgrounds to the buildings in town and the blocks that make up the majority of the levels. Visually this game looks a lot like the old Game Boy Castlevania Legend games due to the severe lack of color– this is what one might think those old portable games would look like if played through a Super Game Boy on a Super Nintendo. I am not saying that the color selection is bad, the choices are fitting considering the limitations of the platform we seeing this on.

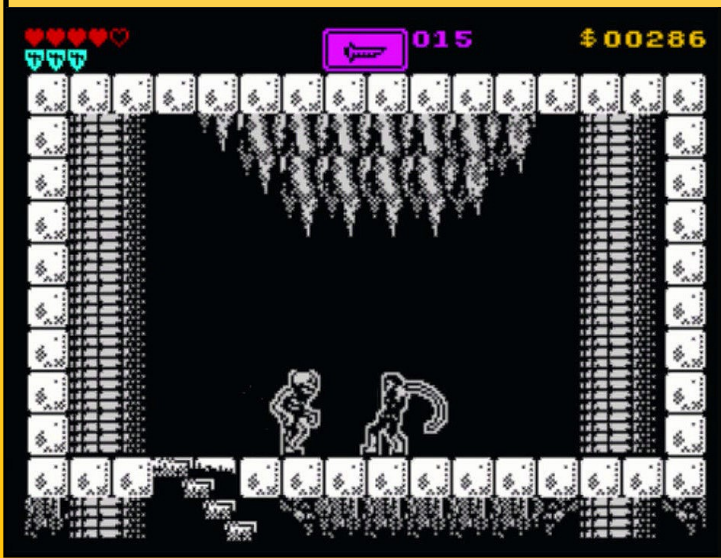


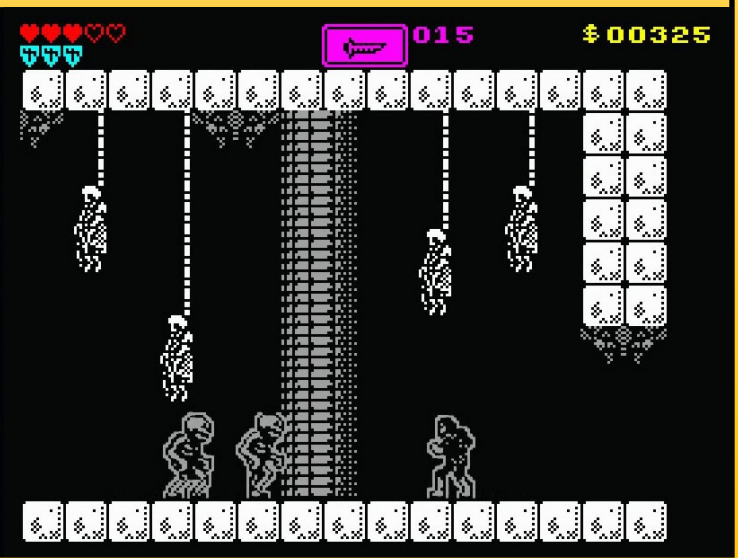
Features include one town with multiple people and several rooms, one outlaying area with werewolves and skeletons once you descend the stairs to the depths. Also some screens are underground and feature some . Not a lot of game play but, remember, this is a demo. The full version will surely feature more levels, more enemies, basically more of everything– except color probably.

The controls are easy to use but somewhat awkward with "P" (right) and "O" (left) and "Space" (whip) as the main action buttons. Gamers are probably more used to the Quake control format, aka WASD but you will quickly get used to Castlevania's setup.

Fans know there is a lot of content in the Castlevania series that can be exploited in fan works like this. It is refreshing to see someone making a fan game based on Simon's Quest as that is my favorite Castlevania game, and the only one that I personally beat. I will definitely be watching the development of this game as it progresses.

This is, for all intents and purposes, Castlevania II on the ZX Spectrum.





Legends for the Atari 2600
Release: Full version to release soon
Words: Carl Williams

Interesting: Different take on the horror movie genre
Improve it by: Adding more movie monsters
Annoying Because: We have to wait for the final version

Who doesn't remember the first time they watched a horror movie as a child? Whether it be Chucky, Nightmare on Elm Street or Friday the 13th, they all had a lasting effect on our young psyches. Horror movies take on the audience by using our basic fears against us, fear of the dark, nightmares, people in hockey masks, little dolls coming to life and trying to kill us. You know, the normal fears of growing up.

The Atari 2600 had a few horror games based on various properties including Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Halloween. There were a few original horror titles such as Haunted House and Frankenstein's Monster but they were scary for reasons other than a license that evoked fear by name alone for many.

Since the Atari 2600 is quite open architecture, probably an accident beset out of overall cheapness, the homebrew community has been able to run rampant on the, long, defunct hardware. Legends is just one such homebrew title that is being worked on by a small team of homebrew developers, artists and audio engineers. What sets Legends apart though is the setting.

You are put in control of a little kid named Chip who is probably about the same age as most of us were when we first discovered what "slasher flick" meant. Chip is really into watching these horror movies, an aficionado of the macabre.

Similar to the idea behind Halloween III: Season of the Witch where the fourth wall is demolished, though Legends is set to have a much better go at it than that atrocity of a horror movie.

With a similar premise, Legends tells the story of Chip who we have established knows horror movies inside and out (without parental permission of course). One day, Chip receives a new game in the mail, another dream of every kid is free games so you know he opened it without reading anything about it and plugged it into his console and well, that is when life goes downhill for young Chip.

This game is not just any game, it is a game that opens a portal into the worlds of the horror movies that Chip loves so much. Talk about breaking down the fourth wall. Time for Chip to don his favorite hockey mask and striped sweater and enter the world of living horror.

Each level is headed by a major horror icon such as Leatherface, Jason Vorhees and Freddy Krueger just to name a few of the included horror icons. More are being added. Traversing the levels requires avoiding traps and denizens such as bats that are just as annoying here as in other games. We will have more information on our site for Legends as it becomes available.

Sydney Hunter and the Mayan's Revenge for NES
Release: Full version to release soon
Words: Carl Williams

Interesting: Take on action/puzzle games
Improve it by: Releasing it already
Annoying Because: We seriously want to play this game

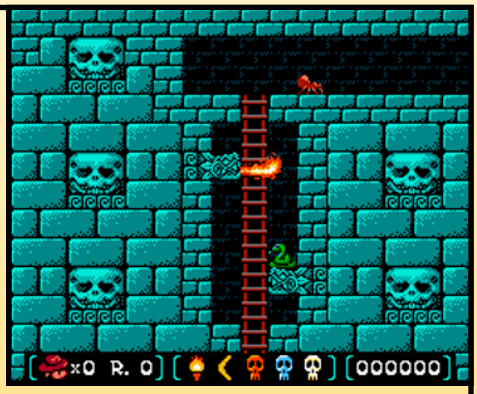
The Nintendo Entertainment System is still quite new to homebrew creations due to Nintendo putting so much work into keeping piracy down on the console with lockout chips and other security measures. This has not stopped independent game developers from creating some interesting games, just slowed them down a bit. Now that the system is much more open, more and more games are starting to appear.

One such game is Sydney Hunter and the Mayan's Revege from Collectorvision. Sydney Hunter is an action puzzle game that is based on a flash game series that is popular on gaming portals on the web.

Much like classic NES games of yesteryear is a side scrolling action game but with some puzzle elements mixed in. Mayan's Revenge is based heavily on the fondly remembered computer game, Montezuma's Revenge.

From the available screenshots we can see that Mayan's Revenge is not going to be a super serious title, nor is it going to be a goofy romp through some tombs. While cartoony in look it seems there will be some serious trouble for those that do not watch their step and tackle problems procedurally.

Statues blow fire while snakes await the unsuspecting adventurer. There are bones laying on the ground throughout the tombs which relay the fact that this is a deadly adventure that others have failed.



Speculation is high on Sydney Hunter for the NES since the only screenshots released so far border this article. There is not a lot of information to be gleaned from them other than graphical look and some partial level layout.

Graphically Mayan's Revenge is one of the better looking Nintendo games I have seen, especially from the independent scene where it is usually one man teams creating these games. The bricks are super detailed, skeletons laying on the ground look like a pile of bones and snakes look menacing, in a cartoon kind of way.

Sydney Hunter may seem familiar to gamers who have been around the independent scene for awhile. He bears a striking resemblance to Rick Dangerous, another treasure hunter that has been getting around on retro consoles over the recent years. This similarity is probably due to both characters drawing inspiration from the Indiana Jones film franchise. More on Sydney Hunter as we know it.

Reblobed for Sega Dreamcast by 2D RetroPerspectives
Release: To Be Announced
Words: Carl Williams

Interesting: New Dreamcast game that is not a shooter
Improve it by: just keep doing what you are doing
Annoying Because: We are impatient but will wait anyhow

As you already know the Post Mortem article is all about new games for dead consoles. As you will see in this article there are new games coming out for many old consoles after they see their commercial life come to an end.

Reblobed pits players in a six level jaunt to protect the island. Played in a side scrolling view hearkens back to the good old days of gaming. Back when 2D ruled the roost and 3D was crappy sprite scaling, or pixelated Mode 7.

One such title is Reblobed from 2D RetroPerspectives for the Sega Dreamcast. This is a remake of the companies first game, Jump 'n Blob. The story of Reblobed follows that of the original title, think of Reblobed as the HD remake with minimal changes to the story.

Players take control of Blob, a small blue shapeless blob for lack of a better word, who is lives on an island in the middle of nowhere in a magical ocean. Just enjoying life as most blue blobs that live on an island paradise do.

Little does Blob know but the evil, demonic wizard, BeastKing is taking over the peaceful island, one tribe at a time. Blob is the only thing that stands between the BeastKing and ruling the whole, formerly peaceful island. Who will prevail?

The Dreamcast is a 2D powerhouse which gives us great hope for Reblobed to be a graphical tour de force on the system. 2D RetroPerspectives are not new to Sega's final console either as they have released other games already. The original Jump 'n Blob, 2D House of Terror and Rectangle Battle are other titles that they have released on the Sega Dreamcast.

Reblobed is not the only upcoming Sega Dreamcast title that 2D RetroPerspectives have in the works. They are also working on an overhead action role playing game called Saviour which is heavily influenced by classic action RPG's such as Alundra and Grandia.

We will be reviewing Reblobed when it is released on Dreamcast in a future issue. For now, check the screens.

DIGITAL COMICS

For many that are reading this, the concept of a digital comic is totally alien. This is a genre that has fallen flat on its face in North America, probably due to a lack of properly conveying to gamers what to expect. Snatcher is the most well known digital comic to have been released here and that game reportedly sold only a few thousand copies on the Sega CD (not exactly a powerhouse in sales itself). This caused other games in this genre, most notably the quasi sequel to Snatcher, to not be released in North America.

Over the next several pages we present to you a selection of digital comics from Japan that we never got here in the United States. As you will see, even before Snatcher, this genre was alive and thriving in the Japanese market, it is still going strong if anyone is wondering.

Before diving into digital comics, please check out this little guide to playing them so you can better prepare yourself.

Gameplay:

The first, and most striking, thing about digital comics is the lack of action onscreen. This also translates to not needing good hand eye coordination to enjoy these games since there are very few that feature "twitch" gameplay. Most digital comics have a menu system that is used to interact with the game world. Some, like Policenauts and Akira, allow moving a cursor around to click on something on the screen but these instances do not require Street Fighter level controller prowess. These games are closer to what you might expect in a PC adventure title such as the King's Quest series or Leisure Suit Larry, though much more focused on the task at hand. Older titles such as Uninvited and Shadowgate did make it out in North America and they feature very similar gameplay but they allow an inventory system, something digital comics shy away from though some items are allowed such as picking up a gun in Snatcher that is used later in the game.

0-Look
1-Check
2-Item
3-Metal Gear
5-Bias
Metal Gear"This is the JUNKER-only vehicle, the 'tricycle'. It can run on the ground with 3 wheels, hover or fly in high-speed. It's basically a VTOL therefore can perpendicularly levitate even from limited space."
Command:(Look)(Car)
Metal Gear"Fresh from the mint. A 2042 model 'interceptor'. Manufactured by the same company that makes space shuttles."

Digital comics are only about the here and now, interacting with the game screen that is currently shown and that is it. This may seem EXTREMELY limiting but, games like Snatcher prove it can be really challenging even without a few hundred items in your inventory to fiddle around with.

Story Telling:

This is where digital comics excel. The story is about 98% of the fun that you will have with a digital comic while the remaining 2% is from figuring out the challenges presented. The stories told in these games are usually more concise than a Role Playing Game (RPG) but more complicated than your usual action game. Super Mario Bros and Contra both have stories tied to the action on the screen but it is usually less than a paragraph long. Digital comics tell a complete story of the game world and allow the player to bounce around in it till they figure out what is going on and how to progress the story– other, more devious digital comics won't allow movement around the game world if you are stuck.

Graphics and Sound:

Since these games have to rely on the story so much, the graphics and sound have to be pretty damn good (though we are wondering what happened to the art budget on Akira). Some games like Play Novel Silent Hill rely solely on converted pictures of the game from another platform while titles like Snatcher and Radical Dreamers relied on original artwork and music.

Digital comics are still new to many gamers in North America, even with the popularity of digital only distribution services like Playstation Network and Xbox Live alleviating much of the financial barrier, there has yet to be many of these titles getting released here. It is a shame because as you will find out in the next several pages, there are some great storylines that don't feature people with retractable claws or whom play in a bat-suit.

DIGITAL COMICS

Enter Silent Hill...

Only Silent Hill fans need apply.

Words: Michael Crisman

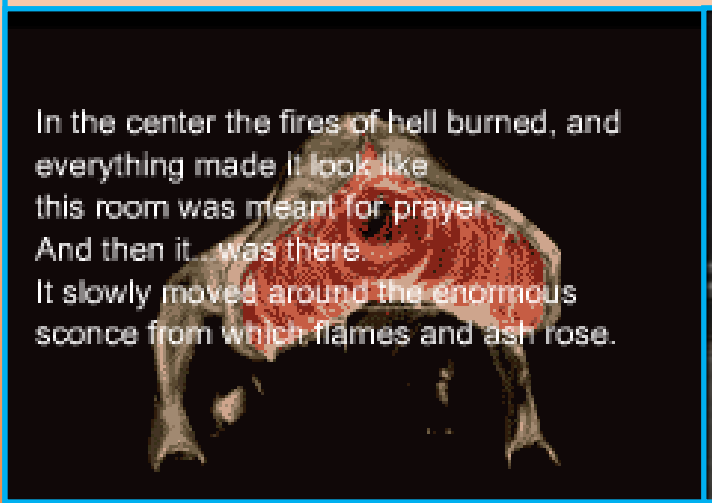
Last issue, we featured a review of Sacred Line, a visual novel-style game released as a homebrew title for the Sega Genesis. In that article, we promised more on visual novels to come, and mentioned Play Novel: Silent Hill. Judging from our inbox, there was significant interest in learning more about this reinterpretation of Konami's famous survival horror title so including it in our Visual Novels section was a no-brainer.

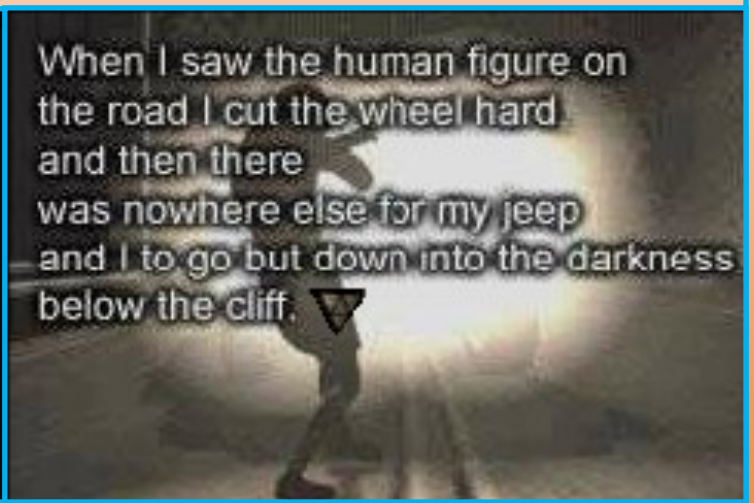
PNSH is both a re-imagination and expansion of the PS1 title, but presented in such a way as to remove the 'twitch' factor. So instead of relying on jump scares and on-screen action to send chills up your spine, it goes for a more cerebral form of supplying creeps: your imagination. Like an adult version of those picture books you read as a child, PNSH takes you on a head trip through a world of darkness and depravity, with the main character's actions guided by your own personal choices. It's a world with many potential outcomes\in fact, PNSH offers more endings in its compact form than the original PlayStation edition.

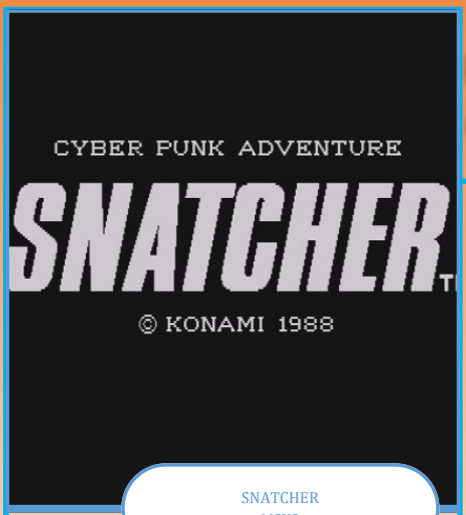
Best of all, PNSH delves deeper into the mythos of Silent Hill itself, expanding on characters and plot points we never get to explore in the original version. Where does Cybil go after meeting Harry in the cafe? Why is a police officer from Brahms in Silent Hill to begin with? What happens when Cheryl and Alessa meet for the first time? Now is your chance to find out. Additionally, PNSH offers up different puzzles to solve and re-arranges some of the events in the original, so even if you've memorized your way through Harry's PS1 adventure, you'll find plenty of events, asides, and situations unique to the visual novel experience.

PNSH offers an extremely useful flowchart function, something not often seen in visual novels, which allows you to essentially fast forward or backtrack in the plot at your leisure, allowing the player to skip large swaths of the game once you've seen them already. There's also a text fast-forward feature, and a review option that lets you go back and re-read text you've already scrolled past in a given scene. Also, while some choices in the game move you towards a less-desirable ending, there aren't any game over screens. It's nice to be able to concentrate on directing the story without worrying about health drinks or getting overrun by a boss monster.

Visit www.alchemillahostpital.net to play.


In the center the fires of hell burned, and everything made it look like this room was meant for prayer.
And then it...was there.
It slowly moved around the enormous sconce from which flames and ash rose.


When I saw the human figure on the road I cut the wheel hard and then there was nowhere else for my jeep and I to go but down into the darkness below the cliff.



DIGITAL COMICS

SNATCHER
MSX2

Play it like it was meant to be played
Words: Carl Williams

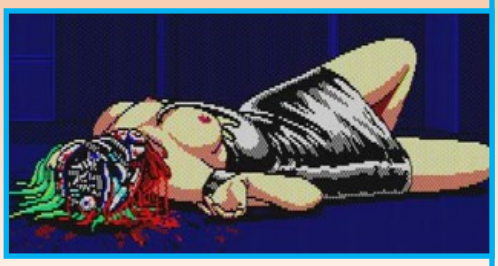
Snatcher has a storied history around the world, almost as varied as the systems it has been released on over the years. Officially, Snatcher is probably the only "true" digital comic that we received in North America and it was on the Sega CD (why no PC release was ever made, I will never understand). This extremely limited release has led to rather high prices for an original copy on Ebay.

Set in the past, now, Snatcher opens by telling the story of a biological weapon that mistakenly gets released into the air which resulted in over 75% of the population of Eurasia being killed. 50 years later artificial life forms appear with sinister plans for the remaining people. You come in as Gillian Seed who has amnesia but is employed with the job of eliminating these robots.

That is the basic story that is the same across all of the various versions of Snatcher. What is different though is the actual game that makes it through the censoring process that still pervades throughout gaming. Not all versions of Snatcher are the same.

Snatcher for the MSX2 is the second game that Hideo Kojima directed, after the original Metal Gear (see page 14 of this issue) for more on that game in our "Fan Translations" coverage. While there are similarities between most of Kojima's games, they are different affairs– there is no over arching storyline to worry about.

Anyone that has followed Snatcher on the Sega CD, or just about any other platform, will notice that the MSX2 version has a smaller play graphic display with more text onscreen. That is not the only change that you can expect with the MSX2 version, the other changes are more in line with blood, guts and destruction with the occasional half naked girl onscreen to spice things up.



There are some topless robots in Snatcher and a canine that lived a better life than how it died. This is not your children's book style of game, Snatcher is squarely pointed at the mature audience. This showed even in the censored Sega CD version which still had mature themes (the strip club, black market, drug use, murder, etc). Speaking of the strip club, the patrons are not the same as you saw in the Sega CD version– instead they are based on movie icons, can you name them all?

Snatcher on the MSX2 is pretty much the same game that you have played on Sega CD, just with more of what made the game world seem gritty and dangerous. Gone are the Justifier interactive scenes though and you get the normal length introduction (Sega CD players got an extended intro). What is here is unadulterated Snatcher in all of its glory.

Snatcher is tamer than what gamers play today, though.

June 6, 1991 - Moscow
'Chernoton Research Center' mysteriously exploded.
'Lucifer Alpha', a biological weapon under secret
development then leaked into atmosphere.
A bio hazard occurred.

0-Look
1-Check
2-Item
3-Metal Gear
5-Bias
Metal Gear"This is the JUNKER-only vehicle, the 'tricycle'.
It can run on the ground with 3 wheels, hover or fly
in high-speed. It's basically a VTOL therefore can
perpendicularly levitate even from limited space."
Command:<<Look>><<Car>>
Metal Gear"Fresh from the mint. A 2042 model 'interceptor'.
Manufactured by the same company that makes space
shuttles."

DIGITAL COMICS

RADICAL DREAMERS
SNES/SFAM

Chrono Trigger world gets expanded
Words: Carl Williams

In Japan, the Super Famicom the equivalent of the Super Nintendo, received an add-on called the Satellaview. The Satellaview required a RAM cartridge, to save games, and of course access to a satellite dish to get the games in the first place. There were many games released this way including a Zelda game and the one we are discussing here, Radical Dreamers from Square Soft, now Square-Enix.

Radical Dreamers is set in the world of Chrono Trigger and Chrono Cross, a game world that is quite popular with North American gamers. This is a "gaiden" story, aka a side story, and is not "canon" for the main series. This explains why Radical Dreamers was not released here.

Basically, Radical Dreamers follows the efforts of three adventurers who are looking to make a name for themselves as, well, thieves. The story is told by one of these thieves, Serge, who is accompanied by Kid, a 16 year old master thief and a magic user named Magil. They learn of Viper Manor, a score just too sweet to pass up so they attempt it on a full moon night. That is a recipe for disaster if I have ever heard of one.

Game-play is pretty sparse with Radical Dreamers as your most used ability will be reading and comprehending what is going on. There is fighting creatures, using items and wandering around the levels but that is all handled via a choice system at intervals.

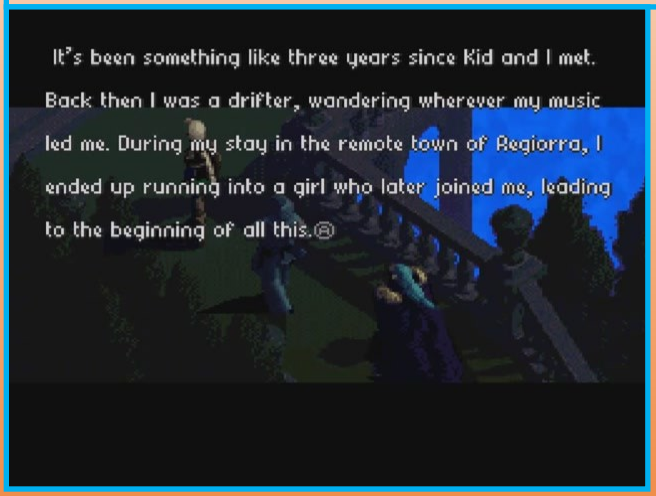
Musically, Radical Dreamers doesn't disappoint since the musical score was composed by Yasunori Mitsuda. Don't know who that is? You know his work if you have played Chrono Trigger or Chrono Cross.

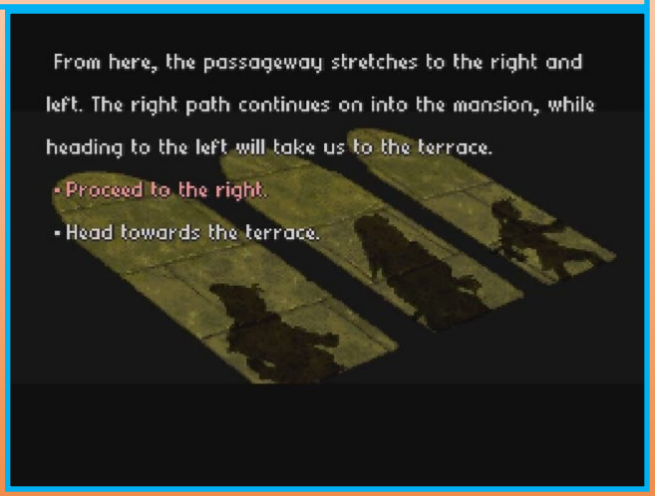
Once you complete the opening storyline, there are six more scenarios to play through. These additional stories range from serious to funny and everything in between while being variations of the main storyline.

The graphics are quite nice, probably the best of the games represented in this article. Square really went all out on the artwork, and the aforementioned music. In many backgrounds there are little animations like clouds floating by, bats flapping their wings and rocking back and forth and more.

Of all the games in this article, this is probably the one with the least amount of actual game-play. That may turn off some but for others, the story and music more than make up for lack of controller activity.

Radical Dreamers is not only for the die-hard Chrono Trigger/Cross fans, fantasy fans can get a lot of fun out of this game. The story is great and is amplified if you are familiar with the other two games set in this world.


It's been something like three years since Kid and I met. Back then I was a drifter, wandering wherever my music led me. During my stay in the remote town of Regiorra, I ended up running into a girl who later joined me, leading to the beginning of all this.


From here, the passageway stretches to the right and left. The right path continues on into the mansion, while heading to the left will take us to the terrace.
• Proceed to the right.
• Head towards the terrace.

DIGITAL COMICS

POLICENAUTS
PLAYSTATION

Quasi sequel to Snatcher kicks butt
Words: Carl Williams

Starting life as a PC-9821 game, Policenauts is at its core a digital comic with action scenes interspersed. Playing Policenauts is just like most of the other games in this feature. Controls are kept simple while great artwork is shown across the top of the screen but with this game, there is extensive voice acting available (in Japanese of course).

Since Policenauts never came out in North America we can dispense with "what was missing" because it is all new to you. The story is interesting and well thought out as this game is DEEP. You play as Jonathon Ingram, former Astronaut Police officer (a Policenaut) that was lost in space for a quarter of a century due to an accident. Like most down on their luck cryogenically frozen and revived people do, Jonathon becomes a private investigator. Jonathon's ex-wife, Lorraine, comes to hire him to find her missing ex-husband, at first it is a no go. Amazingly, Lorraine is murdered, Jonathon can't catch the guy so he fulfills her last wish and travels to Beyond Coast.

You meet up with your former partner who kicks things off as if the last 25 years were a blink in the eye and brings you onboard to help protect Beyond Coast– the first full functioning space colony. Normal day.

The characters in Policenauts have similarities to characters in other mediums. For instance, Jonathon and his partner, Ed Brown, greatly resemble Riggs and Murtaugh– the leads of the Lethal Weapon franchise of movies.

The level of deepness infused into this game is amazing. Hideo Kojima and his team have left nearly no stone that could be investigated or turned over, without an explanation and a damn good one at that. For more on this aspect of Policenauts, check out our interview with Artemio Urbina starting on page 6.

North American gamers got this close to an official English Version.

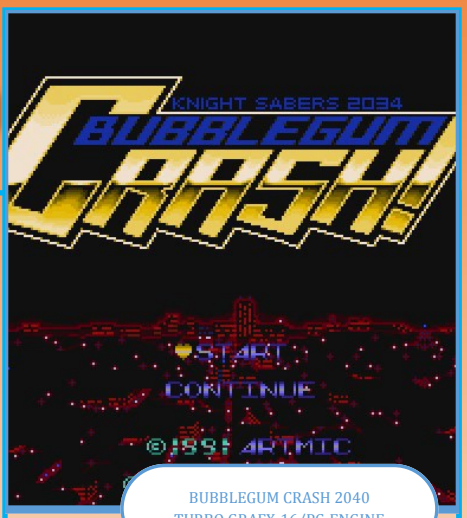
Playing Policenauts will require a lot of reading and possibly writing down terms you need to research later. This is not a rush game that you will finish in less than an hour after starting.

There was a North American version planned for release but it never materialized due to problems with the voice tracks and Full Motion Video scenes. A mockup box was produced for the Sega Saturn version.

There have been rumors of Policenauts getting translated for years but nothing has come out officially from Konami on the subject. It is probably a safe bet that if there is an English voice track, text and all of that that it would be a minimal financial hurdle to release it to fans. The question is, will Konami eventually decide to release it?

DIGITAL COMICS

Anime goes to the games



BUBBLEGUM CRASH 2040
TURBO GRAFX-16/PC-ENGINE

Classic sci-fi Anime in game form
Words: Michael Crisman

Knight Sabers...Go! With those words, four women in personal power armor set out to engage and neutralize, by any means necessary, whatever adversary they faced. Whether targeting the head of a multi-national corporation, or taking down rogue combat robots (called Boomers), Priss, Linna, Sylia and Nene struggled to remain one step ahead of the police who were desperate to put a stop to their vigilante antics.

The PC Engine got this enjoyable, if simplistic, digital comic back in 1991. English-speaking fans had to wait fifteen years for an unofficial translation patch, but for fans of adventure games and anime, grabbing this one is a no-brainer. Graphics are quite stylized, with both the statics and animations looking like they could have been pulled straight from the original cels. But while the music is nice and pulled from the anime itself, it suffers from being on a HuCard. A licensed property like BGC really could have benefited from a CD release, if for no other reason than the richer soundtrack options you get from Redbook specs.

The game plays very similarly to other point-and-click adventure games like Maniac Mansion or Shadowgate, where you pick from a limited number of actions, then click on the screen where you want to perform that action ('Talk' to a character, 'Look' at a computer screen, etc...). Most of the game is spent controlling Nene Romanova, who works for the A.D. Police as a dispatcher. The last part of the game makes a rather stark transition to an RPG-lite style, with 3D maze navigation and active time battles involving all four Knight Sabers, though you only get to control one of them at a time. This is odd, since they're trained to fight as a team instead of taking on enemies one-on-one. It might have made some sense if Priss was the main character as she's the loner of the group. But Nene's the 'support character' of the group, the one with the least amount of combat skill, so it seems odd to make her the face of Bubblegum Crash when there's eventually going to be a big boss fight at the end of the game.

Critiques aside, Bubblegum Crash is an entertaining bit of retro gaming goodness for those who enjoy classic adventure games like Snatcher, which are more dialog-driven than action-heavy. It's a fun story that entertains for a few hours and then goes home. Fans of the Bubblegum Crisis series doubtlessly know about this game's existence already, but newer anime fans may enjoy this look back at what the 80s and early 90s were like, both in terms of

DIGITAL COMICS

JESUS: KYOFU NO BIO MONSTER
NES/FAMICOM

Not the Bible Jesus, this one is sci-fi
Words: Carl Williams

This is one of those games that is a an obvious "duh" no wonder this didn't come out in North America. From the name of the game to the graphics, it is pretty easy to see why Enix, now Square-Enix, didn't bother bringing this one over.

Translated the name means Jesus: Dreadful Bio-Monster, nothing all that bad there. The title is indeed intended to refer to the Biblical Jesus, could be a stickler for a Nintendo game. The space ship is shaped like a double bladed sword which is meant to infer thoughts of the Book of Revelation. Another problem that could have stopped a localization effort. None of that is a deal stopper though, Enix could have gotten around all of it if they wanted to.

The story for Jesus is somewhat original, which is why it is so interesting to play. Set in 2061, Halley's Comet is on a path that will bring it close to the planet, Mars. The nations of Earth detect something that resembles life in the gaseous area of the comet. This amazing find cannot be allowed to simply fly by without investigation. That is why the ship, Jesus, is dispatched to rendezvous with the comet and check out this new life form. What will be found in the gas? Will it be friendly? If the movie Aliens is anything to go by, it won't be.

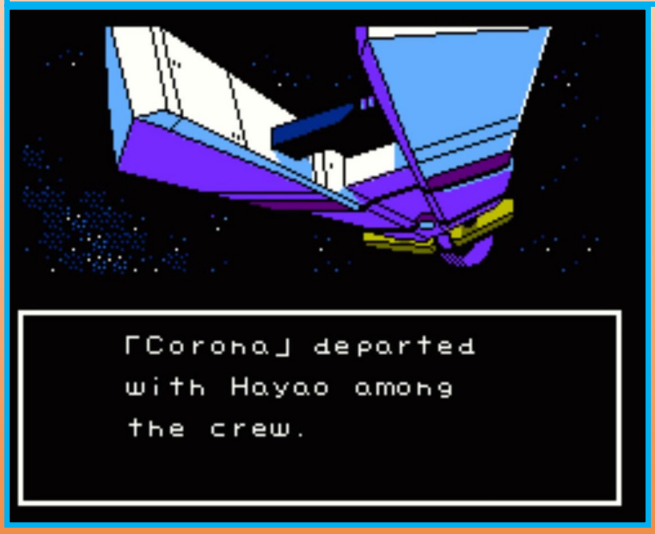
Gameplay-wise, Jesus is pretty linear. You are not likely to die of anything in the game, kind of a bummer considering the situations that you will be facing. Now, the other characters, they are kind of left out in the void of space as far as their safety goes. The question is, how will they meet their demise?

There are some weird staff choices for the crew of Jesus, one in particular is a keyboardist of all things who is trying to write new songs and the like. Not sure how this would help on a space ship but well, she is on your crew in this game. She even wears a leotard during off hours.

Get ready for your encounter with the alien creatures, remember they carry a predisposition to be evil and deadly. Some of these things look like a cross between Hordak from She-Ra and a four legged spider while others are directly out of your worst nightmares.

Graphically, everything has the nice 80's Anime look to it but there is very little animation to speak of. Colors are bright and contrast well getting the point across without too much trouble. One thing that bothered me with Jesus was the abbreviation work on the commands when there was obviously room for an expanded command box. It couldn't have been space restraints because many of the commands appear in the text of the game.

If you want a nice introduction to Digital Comics and like sci-fi, give Jesus a chance. The training wheels don't get in the way.



DIGITAL COMICS

AKIRA
NES/FAMICOM

The beloved Anime in game form.
Words: Carl Williams

This is one of those articles that I kind of dread writing. Akira is either loved or hated by those that have seen it, there is no middle ground really. It is a very polarizing Anime. Unfortunately for North American gamers, we never got the NES game that was based on the movie. Thanks to fans though, that has been rectified and the game is pretty good, not as good as the Anime though.

The game opens with Kaneda having been taken into police custody with most of his motorcycle gang minus one member who was abducted by the military.

Gameplay is similar to Policenauts (page 26) with a cursor and menu combination for interacting with the game world. Picking look from the menu will allow you to move a cursor around the screen and select exactly what you want to look at whether it be a person or an item.

The game is not great but for fans of the movie it will be worth checking out since most of the scenes are redrawn from the movie. Since this is the NES we are talking about, there probably was no way to scan cells from the movie and include those. What is here is decent, thought the art could have been better as Jesus (previous page) shows the NES is capable of better.

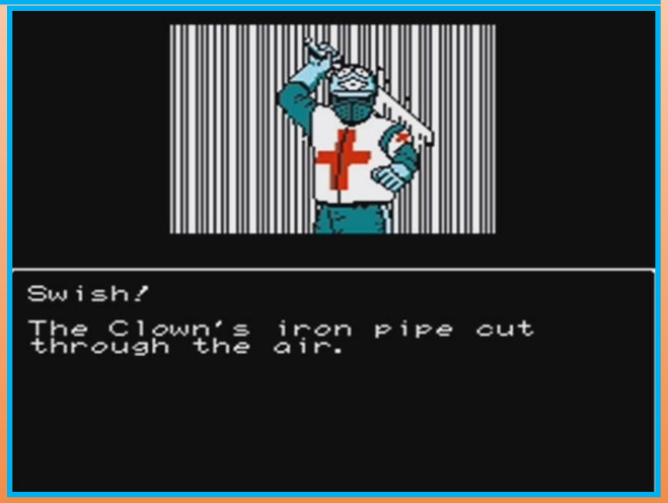
Character artwork is quite poor and many times who you are interacting with is off in the distance of the scene. It would have been better had the designers used more close-up shots of the characters in the game so that you could better make out what is going on. The way the game is now, you may as well be literally talking to a wall since you will be hard pressed to see the NPC that is talking.

There is no real need to have watched, or enjoyed, the Anime that this game is based on. Everything is pretty well explained in the game. This makes it easier for anyone interested in thinking they are controlling the story of Akira.

The text is pretty hard to read in many places as the game tries quite hard to follow the movie and some of the text simply doesn't make sense when trying to figure out your next move. It doesn't help that so many non-player characters are given extremely generic names such as "groupie" or "Army" and the like. This makes it hard to identify with the person talking, let alone keeping the story straight as you progress in the game.

Akira was a classic Anime but there is a reason the game is not revered in a similar light. The developers could have done so much better to create a gaming classic. This one is only for die-hard Akira fans, everyone else check out some of the other Digital Comics in this issue for better games.

Yamagata: There were Clowns, demonstrators, cops, the damn Army... And that idiot Tetsuo had to go and have that accident.
Groupie: What!? What happened to Tetsuo?!



Game Hacks

Game hacks take a commercial game and change it around in such a way that it can become a new game that happens to use the original game engine, graphics and sounds. Some of the better game hacks are called "total conversions", a term popularized by First Person Shooter game edits. Total Conversions change everything effectively creating a new game. We have two examples of both types of game hacks in this issue. On these two pages is a new version of Sonic the Hedgehog on Sega Genesis called Sonic Winter Adventures. On page 32 and 33 we have Pro Wrestling and Rygar hacks for the Nintendo Entertainment System.

Sonic Winter Adventures

It is no secret that Sonic was Sega's attempt at taking on Nintendo's mascot, Mario. Sonic did a fairly good job with marketing Sonic and to that effect, Sega was able to maintain at least a marginal lead on the Super Nintendo for the mid part of the 16-Bit console war.

Eventually the Super Nintendo and Mario did edge out a win in this battle, partly because the SNES was supported for many years longer than the Genesis (Sega had other things to focus on).

Russian rom hacker, vladikcomper, has taken the original Sonic the Hedgehog and added many things to it creating nearly a new game. Some of the basic moves from later Sonic games are included in this hack and in other cases, brand new moves have been added.

Sonic 4 Episode I and II have a homing attack that is pretty handy, that move is available to you in Sonic Winter Adventures along with a jump dash and super peel out. These moves compliment the normal jump attack and Spin Dash that Sonic received in later Genesis Sonic games.

Since vladikcomper is Russian, it is only fitting that there be a Russian language option in Sonic Winter Adventures. You can switch between English and Russian in the Options menu. Maybe in a future update additional languages will be made available.

The levels in Sonic Winter Adventures are expansive but still offer plenty of room for speed demons to just go nuts. Those that want to take their time and collect rings can do so along with many powerups that are hidden around the level such as speed boots, force field and of course, invulnerability to name a few.

This could have almost been an official game, almost.

Game Hacks

The enemies you will face are the usual Sonic fare, none are "new" except for the bosses which are unique and challenging to defeat. The first boss comes out of nowhere but if you pay attention, you will see that you literally pass him in the level as he sits unassumingly on a ledge prior to the battle screen. Defeating this firepower spewing machine will take a lot of paying attention and trial and error to get his pattern down.

This thing has several attacks from the basic brute force attempt to bouncing around the screen in a deadly game of squash and spewing firepower when he calms down.

There are only a handful of levels in Sonic Winter Adventures, nothing near what Sega gave gamers officially but what is here is amazingly cool. Playing this game to its fullest requires taking leaps of faith in some places then running like hell through other areas plowing through a ton of enemies and hitting springs causing you to soar to new heights, and that is just the first level.

The speed shown in Sonic Winter Adventures is some of the best I have ever seen on the Genesis. Had Sega created a Sonic game this fast then gamers might have actually fallen for the whole "Blast Processing" advertising campaign. This game is fast and there is a ton of stuff going on onscreen.

Just look at the background of the first level, that is chunks of ice floating by in perfect line scrolling goodness on top of even more parallax in the background. If you think the Street Fighter II series is the king of parallax scrolling then you need to check out Sonic Winter Adventures it puts to shame what is in Capcom's fighting game.

Sonic Winter Adventures has an amazing ending too, reminiscent of Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom mixed with some Metroid exit strategies. This was very well done and was a great end to this game hack. I can not go into detail without ruining it, suffice to say, you won't be disappointed when you finish this hack.

There are a ton of Sonic hacks available not just Sonic Winter Adventures, though SWA is one of the better ones that I have found. This feels like a Sonic Gaiden (Side Story) and could pass as a transition title for those waiting with baited breath for another quality, official, Sonic game from Sega.

If you know of a game hack that you want us to take a look at, just let us know and we will check it out.

Game Hacks

The story of how Sony got into gaming is quite a story, not one we will repeat all of here but they had the door held open for them by Nintendo who promptly pulled the rug out from under them at the last second. Sony got up and promptly took over the gaming world with the Playstation.

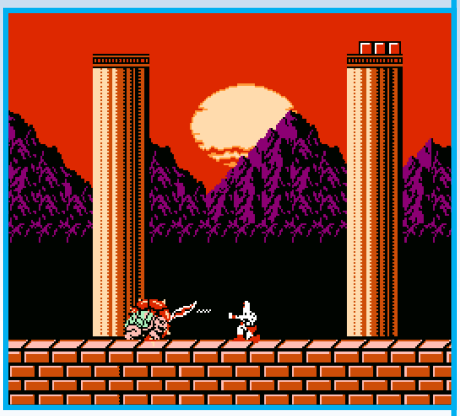
Thanks to game hacker, pacnsacdave, the classic Nintendo Entertainment game, Rygar by Tecmo is now God of War. Obviously this is not an official game from Sony who have learned quite well from their experience with Crash Bandicoot on the original Playstation and how he got away from them into the wild. Sony would probably get out of gaming before they let God of War out of their family of games.

It is quite fitting to take Rygar and hack it to become a God of War game, after all Tecmo showed with the Playstation 2 release of Rygar: The Legendary Adventure that the whole chain weapon thing was not created by Sony's favorite son, Kratos.

The range of the weapon here is not nearly as far as what gamers are used to on the newer Sony hardware but this is an all new adventure for fans to take on. All of the levels are redone and don't resemble the original Rygar game at all, even enemies have been redone to reflect God of War.

God of War on the NES only gives you three hits before it is game over and trust me, this is one tough cookie to beat. Story elements are presented by entering rooms and a person on a high pedestal gives advice or commentary about your objectives coming up. Did I mention this hack is amazingly hard?

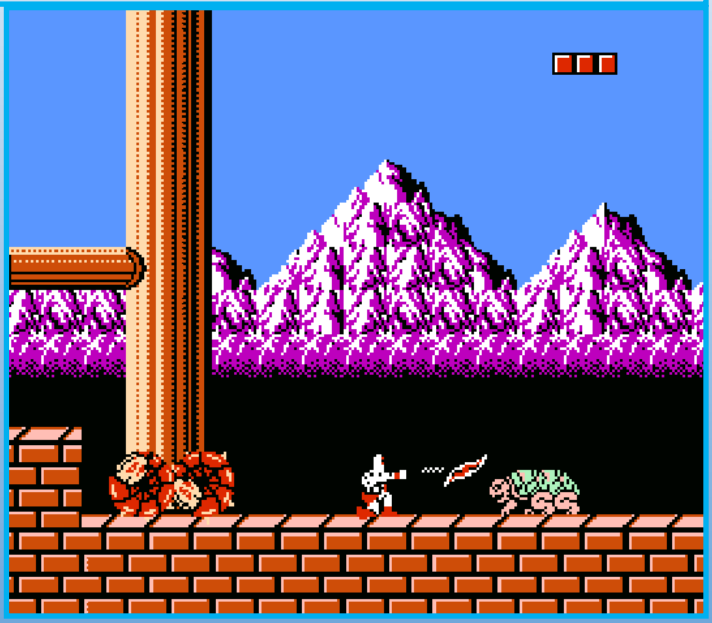
Enemies come out of nowhere and they move like a bat out of hell across the screen giving you very little time to react. This makes the game extremely challenging but for the wrong reasons. Cheapness abound here, be warned. For some gamers this is a welcome challenge but for many, it is just a headache better avoided if possible.



If you feel that games today are too easy, check out this Rygar hack, it is a definitely a flying controller game if I have ever played one.

The limitations of the system are played up to and everyone appears "similar" to the original source material which is needed for these types of hacks to gain popularity with gamers.

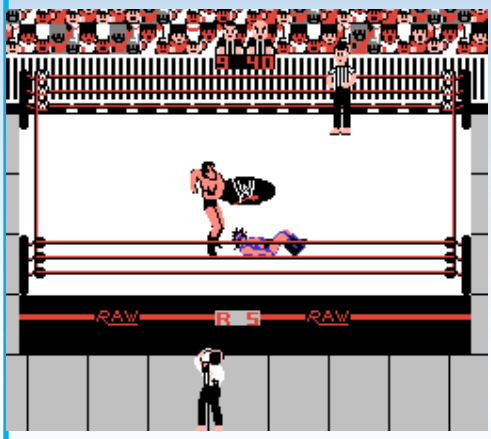
These hacks are interesting because they take old games and breathes new life into them with a more recent game setting. Words by Carl Williams



Game Hacks

Pro Wrestling by Nintendo for the Nintendo Entertainment System was THE 8-Bit wrestling game. Nothing compared to it, especially the crap that LJN and Acclaim were bringing out with big name licenses from WCW and WWE (then WWF). Tecmo was able to come out with a contender with their Tecmo World Wrestling, which featured a running color commentator of all things but it still paled in comparison to Nintendo's grappler.

With no big names tied to it, no super meters and certainly no "icon items" bouncing across the top of the ring, Nintendo was still able to capture the imaginations of wrestling fans. All of the wrestlers in Pro Wrestling are generic grapplers going for a generic title.



This was against licensed games coming out left and right from third parties. This appeared to be an uphill battle but thanks to word of mouth advertising, Nintendo's grappling game came out on top, even against purportedly millions of advertising dollars spent on the competition.

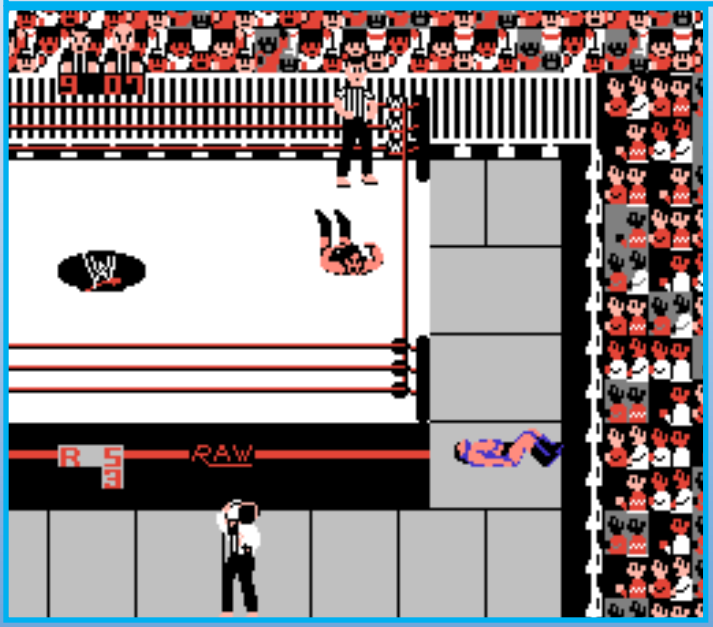
Nintendo games have always been about superior control and feel, not about graphics and sound, which are great.

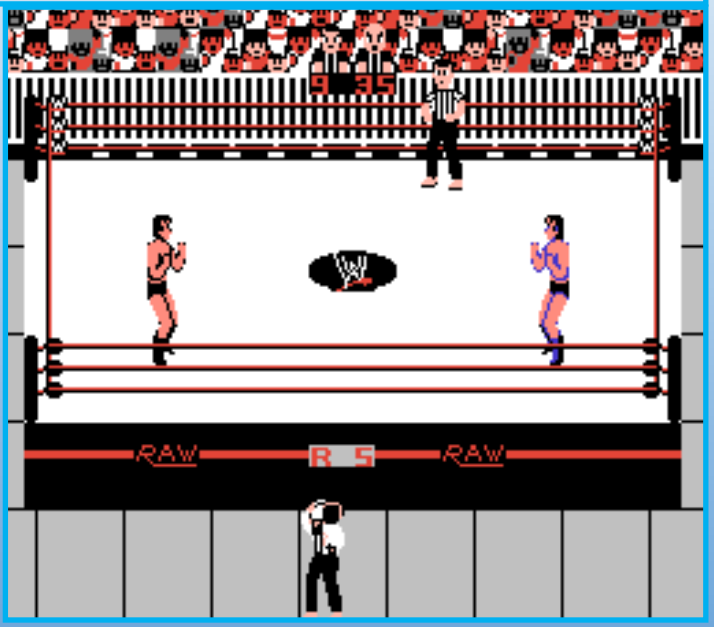
If Acclaim would have been smart they would have created this hack decades ago by licensing the Pro Wrestling engine from Nintendo themselves. Thanks to pacnsacdave (see the previous page for another of is cool hacks) wrestling fans can finally play a WWE game on NES that is actually good.

Wrestlers on hand here include Daniel Bryan, CM Punk, Stone Cold, Triple H, Randy Orton and the Rock. Each wrestler is replacing a Pro Wrestling original while retaining the moves set by Nintendo. You won't be pulling off a Stone Cold Stunner or the Pedigree here, sadly. The sprites don't really resemble the wrestlers they are supposed to be (Starman is Stone Cold Steve Austin).

This is strictly a palette swap with minimal sprite editing which is more than what Midway did for most of the Ninjas in the Mortal Kombat games. The ring has been changed but the referee remains the same and so does the camera man.

If you are a die-hard WWE wrestling fan, check this hack out, it has some of the more popular wrestlers, and one that is apparently more popular due to his absence than he was when wrestling. This is not a new game like God of War on NES is. Words by Carl Williams





SHARP X68000 PERSONAL WORKSTATION

The Best Gaming Computer you don't know about. Yet.

By Carl Williams

X6800. To most reading this, that is simply a weird combination of a letter and numbers. For a select few it is recognized as one hell of a computer that we never got in North America, the Sharp X68000. Released in 1987, and upgraded over the years, the X68000 evaded coming to North America much like the FM Towns Marty did. Reasons for this probably originate around the fact that anything that was not IBM compatible was pretty much dead in North America as proven by the Commodore and Atari line of computers– both of whom were fighting an obviously uphill battle and losing it badly.

On paper, the X68000 looks quite underpowered till later in its life but this thing kicked out some major gaming goodness. Importing is probably out of the question for most people which is eased a little bit by the fact that the operating system, tools and other required parts of the software are freely offered for download without fear of legal action. Everything from the BIOS to several of the operating systems available have been released as freeware which means they are free to use by anyone that wants to download them.

One interesting fact about the X68000 is the involvement of Hudson Soft, who developed the computer for Sharp. Hudson has been quite prolific in retro gaming. For those that do not know, Hudson was also involved with creating the PC-Engine/Turbo Grafx-16 and subsequent NEC platforms while somehow being cozy enough to Nintendo to be able to create various computer games based on Mario. Side note here: Hudson was purchased by Konami a few years back but we have yet to see anything come of that buyout.

The Sharp X68000 is upgradeable from the CPU to the RAM and hard drive, after all this is a computer. The fastest CPU that was made available for the X68000 was a 25 mhz 68030. RAM maxes out at about 12 megs but it is a waste since almost no games require more than a couple of megs. It would be pretty cool to see what this little thing could have done had it lasted longer than it did.

Companies were supporting the X68000 with some heavy hitter titles from Castlevania to Super Street Fighter II. Original titles were made available too including Aquales (similar to Cybernator) and Knight Arms (you just have to see it to believe it).

Capcom used the X68000 for developing games for their CPS arcade platform for many years. Interesting.

Games on the X68000 run the gamut of near perfect arcade ports to original titles that rock harder than similar titles on other platforms. Games such as Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Final Fight, Rygar and Street Fighter II: Champion Edition are just a few of the arcade ports. Original titles such as Aquales, Buster, Geograph Seal and Knight Arms show the X68000 is not just an early Neo Geo style system.

This thing was built for gaming as it features a 3D goggle port, two MSX controller plugs, RGB in/out and TV/ Monitor capabilities. Sharp built this thing for a myriad of end user setups and uses.

It is one thing to talk about hardware and how great it was in the right hands or how cool it could have been. It is another to show you.

Akumajou Dracula is basically another take on the original Castlevania that 8-Bit Nintendo fans may remember playing. What is awesome about this title though is that Konami went back and redid everything from enemies to level graphics and made a whole new game out of it, much like they did with Super Castlevani IV on the Super Nintendo.

Now levels featured painted murals hanging on the walls, extremely detailed amenities such as dilapidated columns and windows that featured cracks and breaks. While there is a lot of cookie cutter art copy/paste going on (normal for all games really) there are a lot of things that only appear once for one scene and are quickly forgotten as you play. Such as the tree in the opening area that is struck by lightening and breaks in half, falling over as Simon walks by. Little details like that make this version stand out.

The bosses are unique and quite different than what we saw in other versions of this game. The detail level is off the charts for many of them such as the water level's flying bone dragon (pictured above). That thing is huge and animates fluidly (not to mention is scary as all get out when you aren't expecting it).

Another boss that is a stand out in this version of Castlevania rests at the top of the clock tower level. This hunchback creature literally takes chunks off of the building and hurls them at you. When that proves to be a failing attempt, he takes a clock hand off of the giant clock in the background and starts using that to impale, or beat the hell out of, Simon.

Ports:

There is a Playstation port of Akumajou Dracula that did reach North America called Castlevania Chronicles. It is not as detailed and has some missing in level enemies (such as the archer statues in the garden level). The Playstation version does feature a bit more animation in the opening cinema. Obviously grabbing this version is cheaper than getting an X68000 and a copy of Akumajou Dracula but it is the better version.

SHARP X68000 PERSONAL WORKSTATION

Capcom Games:

It is no surprise that the X68000 featured some of the best ports of Capcom arcade games since Capcom used this computer as their workstation for many CPS games. By the time Strider hit though, the X68000 was on par with the hardware used so it was still capable of a near perfect port but this is apparently the last of the line of near perfect ports from Capcom. As usual, the Capcom games are some of the best on the system, made better by the power of the X68000.

Strider was one of those system selling games that caught the attention of the gaming world when Sega announced it was coming to their Genesis system in an 8 meg cartridge (the first of its kind). The Genesis version was the best home conversion available, at least in North America garnering a lot of attention from the press and gamers (I bought the game before I had a Genesis just to secure my copy).

At no time did the North America press mention the Sharp X68000, not a single word about it, even though it was available in Japan and gaining market share.

Honestly, had there been a comparison of the Sharp X68000 version with the Genesis version, Sega would have probably not sold near as many Genesis consoles and copies of the game. While the Genesis version is a respectable home port, the X68000 blows it away with a nearly arcade perfect port of Capcoms futuristic action game.

Strider on the X68000 is, for all intents and purposes, the arcade game.

Final Fight is another arcade port that got a lot of attention in North America, this time it was for the Super Nintendo and came directly from Capcom. The SNES port was riddled with problems from the get go though, lack of two player support, Guy got lost on the road to the living room , Poison had a sex change and a complete level was lost.

Gamers let their voices be heard but Capcom could do nothing about it for those that bought the game already (this was before the age of releasing a patch to fix problems). Sega licensed this one too, this time for their Sega CD platform (why not on cartridge, I will never understand) which addressed many of these problems but it was way past the popularity of the arcade game by then and the Super Nintendo had Final Fight 2, and the third part was well known to be on it's way.

The X68000 suffered from none of these problems, probably resulting from the close relationship Capcom had with the hardware at the time. This version was nearly perfect and again could have caused more than a few waves had gamers known about it.

Levels were restored, the full arcade introduction made it home and Poison continued to wear the short half shirt that caught many a gamer eye in the arcade and Guy was still a force to be reckoned with. While the Neo Geo had arcade perfect ports of it's games, easy when you simply repackage the hardware over for the home market, the X68000 held the title of best arcade ports for years without resorting to cheating.

Final Fight has seen arcade perfect emulation ports on the Playstation Portable, Playstation Network and Xbox Live. For retro gamers though, this is the best version of Final Fight that can be played on true retro hardware, just check your credit line at the bank before pursuing on Ebay.

One last Capcom game that needs to be mentioned is **Ghouls 'n Ghosts**, another arcade perfect port that challenged what Sega was able to bring home on the Genesis. While the Sega Genesis version was respectable, covered in issue #1 of RGM, it simply paled in comparison to the competition. That sentiment is more profound when you look at the X68000 version which features nearly ALL of the arcade tidbits that Sega simply couldn't fit into their cartridge.

Capcom were pretty smart with the marketing of the Street Fighter II series. With minor updates to the arcade game they were able to keep the game alive and making money long after it should have been relegated to the discount sale and with each new addition, home gamers wanted a port to their console of choice. Didn't matter if it was SNES or Genesis gamers, both wanted the newest version which Capcom did their best to bring home, in due time. The Sharp X68000 is no different, it received at least two Street Fighter games, Championship edition and Super Street Fighter II (pictured below).

Capcom were quite prolific with the hardware and these versions rocked just as hard as the arcade originals. Street Fighter II completest among our readers, welcome to your financial doom.

SHARP X68000
PERSONAL WORKSTATION

Konami Ports:

Already mentioned was the crown jewel of the X68000 games, Akumajou Dracula, which leaves the rest of the great games from Konami that made it to Sharp's gaming computer. Get ready because Konami was not shy about bringing their shooters to the X68000. **Nemesis '90 Kai** is an enhanced port of **Gradius 2** with some graphical enhancements. This version didn't have players flying the iconic Vic Viper but instead a new ship called the Metalion and there is an emphasis on speed running, long before it was popular on Youtube.

Konami ported a lot of their arcade shooters over to the platform. Gradius, Gradius 2/Nemesis '90 and Parodius all made it. We did not see a port of Metal Gear though which is a bummer, judging from the way the MSX handled that series (pages 14 and 15) it would probably had bee n awesome on the Sharp computer.

Salamander is another popular Konami shooter to make the jump. Check the screenshot below for a good idea of how it looked. There is a bit of slowdown on this boss showing Capcom was probably a lot better verse at programming for this platform.

Konami was one of the few "big name" companies to release an original title for the Sharp X68000, **Akumajou Dracula**. Much like other companies Konami was content with nearly arcade perfect ports though Capcom holds the crown in this department.

Turn the page for some original Sharp X68000 games—

SHARP X68000
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Other Notable Games:

Aquales is going to get slammed as a Cybernator clone but it was released shortly after the first game in that series (Target Earth on Genesis) and before Cybernator. That is another article altogether though. Aquales is a giant robot action game that has a lot in common with newer titles such as Ranger X (wepaons) on Genesis and of course Cybernator (character designs) on Super Nintendno. If you have an X68000, Aquales should be in your game library.

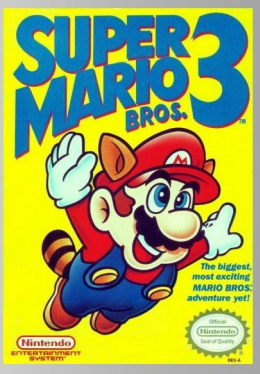
There were even a few Neo Geo ports for the X68000, much like for home consoles in North America, including a rather impressive port of **Viewpoint**. Played from a view that was similar to that of Zaxxon (angled 3/4 view), Viewpoint is known for its challenge and variety in enemies. Slinky's and gears aren't all nice and fun.

Knight Arms is one of those hard to classify action shooters. It features alternating 3D into the screen, ala Star Fox and Space Harrier, action then it changes to side scrolling shooting similar to Gradius or Thunder Force III. For some impressive scaling and feel of depth, with a good game wrapped around it, check out Knight Arms.

Rygar from Tecmo also made the jump to the Sharp X68000 in all of its arcade glory. Forget the NES port that was understood as quite good, especially for the time, this version is much better. Die-hard fans will want this version while everyone else can save a few bucks and enjoy the Atari Lynx port (which is better than the NES game) or just play the arcade original if you can. For X68000 owners, here is another great game to wave in the air.

While North American gamers may never have gotten the X68000 officially, it is just another Japan exclusive gaming computer that would have been cool to have here. It would have definitely competed well with the consoles of the time and could have held its own against the Amiga line of computers and the Atari ST. Too bad Sharp Electronics was not better equipped in the management department to have brought this over at a reasonable price point. Who knows, it might have suffered like the NEC Turbo Grafx-16 did with a lack of quality games here.

Rocking retro like there is no tomorrow.



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